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Faith in God and his Word, the Eſtabliſhment and Proſperity of his People.

A

SERMON

Preached to the

SOCIETY,

Which Support the

Wedneſday's Evening Lecture

IN

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By JOHN GILL, D.D.

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2 Chron. xx. 20.

——Believe in the Lord your God, ſo ſhall ye be eſtabliſhed; believe his prophets, ſo ſhall ye proſper.

IN the beginning of this chapter, we have an account of an invaſion of the land of *Judea* in the times of *Jehoſhaphat*, by the neighbouring nations, who joined in confederacy againſt the *Jews*. Theſe people were always a typical people, and in this their caſe and circumſtances were an emblem of the church and people of God; who in their preſent ſtate are militant. They are ſurrounded with enemies as the Jews were, which are many, lively and ſtrong; they have numerous fleſhly luſts which war againſt their ſouls; and ſome enemies that are not fleſh and blood, but ſpiritual wickedneſſes with whom they wreſtle; and even the whole world is againſt them, and hate, oppoſe, and perſecute them in one ſhape or another to the uttermoſt; ſo that

upon one account or another, for the moſt part, *without* are *fightings*, and *within* are *fears* [a].

The method *Jehoſhaphat* and his people took in this their diſtreſs, was to ſeek the Lord by prayer, and aſk help of him. Prayer is a ſpecial piece of the chriſtian armour; it is the laſt that is mentioned in the account of it; it is the dernier reſort of believers, and which they often uſe to good purpoſe and great advantage. There were ſome ſort of devils in Chriſt's time, who could not be diſpoſſeſſed by any other means; ſatan has often felt the dint of this weapon of our warfare, and dreads it; and dreaded it has been by ſome of his inſtruments. *Mary* Queen of *Scots* uſed to ſay, that ſhe dreaded more the prayers of *John Knox*, a famous Reformer, than ten thouſand armed men; ſo effectual is the fervent prayer of the righteous, as for the bringing down the bleſſings of the covenant of grace upon them, ſo for the intimidating of their enemies, and for their protection from them.

The excellent prayer of *Jehoſhaphat* on this occaſion is recorded; which begins with taking notice of the place of the divine reſidence, heaven; in like manner as our Lord taught his diſciples to pray, ſaying firſt of all, *Our father which art in heaven* [b]; and of the ſovereignty of God over all the kingdoms

[a] 2 Cor. vii. 5. [b] Matt. vi. 9.

doms of the world; and of his uncontroulable and irreſiſtible power; and of his being the covenant-God and father of his people; all which are neceſſary to be obſerved by us in our addreſſes to him, to raiſe in our minds juſt ideas of him, and to encourage our faith and hope in him. The royal ſaint goes on to make mention of the works of God of old; his works of power and might, of grace and goodneſs, in driving the heathens out of the land of *Canaan*, and giving it to the ſeed of *Abraham* for ever; from whence he hoped and concluded, it would not be given up again into the hands of their enemies. He takes notice of the ſanctuary or temple that was built in it, where Jehovah dwelt, granted his preſence to his people, and heard and helped them in the times of their diſtreſs; which was a type of Chriſt's human nature, the temple of his body, the true tabernacle which God pitched, and not man, in which dwells all the fulneſs of the Godhead; and for the ſake of him the Lord hears and anſwers the prayers of his people, when they *look*, as *Jonah* did, *towards his holy temple* [c]; and which, with great pertinency, is here obſerved. Next the ingratitude of their enemies is taken notice of; when *Iſrael* came out of *Egypt*, and paſſed through the wilderneſs, they were bid not to meddle or diſtreſs the *Moabites*, *Ammonites*, and *Edomites*, but

[c] Jon. ii. 4.

turn away from them, as they did; who now reward them evil for good, by attempting to diſpoſſeſs them of the land given them to inherit: and therefore it was hoped the Lord would judge their cauſe and right their wrongs; ſince the king and his people had no power to oppoſe ſuch a numerous army that was come up againſt them; but their eyes were to the Lord, and on him were their dependance, and with him they left the iſſue of things.

The Lord preſently ſhewed himſelf to be a God hearing and anſwering prayer; for immediately, as the king and all the people ſtood before the Lord to hear what he would ſay unto them, the Spirit of the Lord came upon *Jahaziel* a levite, who ſtood up and propheſied, and bid the people not be diſmayed, at the number of their enemies; told them where they were to be met with; aſſured them of victory, nay, that they had no need to fight, the Lord would fight for them; and that they had nothing to do, but to ſtand ſtill and ſee the ſalvation of God; which meſſage *Jehoſhaphat* and the people received with faith, with holy reverence and godly fear, bowing their heads and worſhipping: and ſo fully aſſured were they of the truth of what was promiſed them, that they ſung the praiſes of God, before the deliverance was wrought; upon which they marched out to meet the enemy, when *Jehoſhaphat*

at the head of his army addreſſed it in the words firſt read; *believe in the Lord your God, ſo ſhall ye be eſtabliſhed; believe his prophets, ſo ſhall ye proſper:* " do not truſt in " your numbers, nor in your own ſtrength, " courage, and ſkill; but truſt in your cove- " nant-God, ſo ſhall ye be ſtrengthened, con- " firmed, and animated to engage your ene- " mies with true fortitude of mind; believe " what he has ſaid by his prophets, parti- " cularly by *Jahaziel*, who has juſt now de- " livered a meſſage from him to you, ſo " ſhall ye ſucceed againſt your enemies, and " obtain a compleat victory over them." This is the ſenſe of the words reſpecting the preſent caſe; but they may be applied to believers in any age or period of time, in whatſoever caſe or circumſtances they may be; the main and principal thing in them is faith or believing: concerning which,

I. I ſhall conſider the kind and nature of it.
II. The objects of it, as here expreſſed, the Lord God and his prophets.
III. The advantages ariſing from it, eſtabliſhment and proſperity.

I. I ſhall conſider the kind and nature of faith: There are various ſorts of faith, as the apoſtle ſuggeſts, when he ſays [d], *though I have*

[d] 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

have all faith; that is, all ſorts of faith, which he ſuppoſes a man may have, and not have *charity*, love, or true grace; he means all ſorts but one, namely, ſpecial faith; for whoever has that, has charity or love; for *faith worketh by love*[e]: however there are ſeveral ſorts or kinds of faith.

1. There is a faith of miracles, or of doing miracles; and which the apoſtle in the above words has in view, ſince it follows, *ſo that I could remove mountains*; referring to what our Lord ſaid to his diſciples[f]; *if ye have faith as a grain of muſtard-ſeed, ye ſhall ſay unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it ſhall remove; and nothing ſhall be impoſſible unto you.* Chriſt, when he gave his diſciples a commiſſion to preach the Goſpel, gave them power of working miracles to confirm it; he gave them power over unclean ſpirits to caſt them out, and to heal all manner of diſeaſes; and *Judas* no doubt had this power as well as the reſt; for a man in theſe times might have ſuch a faith, and ſuch a power, and yet not have that ſpecial faith which iſſues in ſalvation. We read[g] of ſome that caſt out devils in the name of Chriſt, and yet are not, and will not be known and acknowledged by him as his.

2. There is a faith which is commonly called an hiſtorical faith; which is a mere aſſent

[e] Gal. v. 6. [f] Matt. xvii. 20. [g] Matt. vii. 22, 23.

aſſent to a ſett of propoſitions as true, and which are true in themſelves, as,

That there is but one God: that there is a God may be known and believed by the light of nature, may be concluded from the things that are made by him; and that this God is but one, is the voice of reaſon and revelation; the language both of the Old and of the New Teſtament; the faith of Jews and Chriſtians; and it is right to believe it; and which may be done where there is not true ſpecial faith: *thou believeſt that there is one God, thou doſt well, the devils alſo believe and tremble* [h]; that is, they believe there is one God, and know there is but one, and tremble through fear of his awful majeſty.

With this ſort of faith a man may believe all that is ſaid and is true of Jeſus Chriſt; as that he is God over all bleſſed for ever, the true God and eternal life; that he is the Son of God and ſaviour of the world; that he is God and man in one perſon; that he became incarnate; that he ſuffered and died for the ſins of men; that he was buried, and roſe again from the dead; that he aſcended up to heaven, is ſet down at the right hand of God, and will come a ſecond time to judge the world; all which a man may believe, and yet be deſtitute of the true grace of God. There are indeed ſome ſtrong expreſſions in the epiſtle of the apoſtle *John*, where

[h] Jam. ii. 19.

where he ſays, that *every ſpirit that confeſſeth that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh, is of God*[i]; *and whoſoever believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born of God*[k]: whereas now there are whole nations that believe theſe things, of multitudes of whom it cannot be thought that they are regenerate perſons. It will help us over this difficulty a little by conſidering times, and times: in the apoſtles times, theſe truths were generally denied; the whole world, Jews and Gentiles, oppoſed them; and then for a man to believe and profeſs them in the face of all oppoſition, and under the ſcandal of the croſs, was a great matter; it was reckoned a proof of true grace, and a criterion of a man's regeneration: but now ſince chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed, and become the religion of nations, to believe all this is no mark or ſign of being born again; for ſuch a national faith is no better than the faith of *Indians* and *Mahometans*, only it happens to have a better object; for the ground and reaſon of it is the ſame; namely, being born and brought up among thoſe who generally believe in the ſame way. Tho' it may be, the true ſenſe of the above expreſſions is this; that every one that embraces, profeſſes, or preaches that Chriſt is come in the fleſh, or is become incarnate, is on the ſide of God and truth; and that whoever believes that Jeſus of *Nazareth*

[i] 1 John iv. 2. [k] 1 John v. 1.

zareth is the true Meſſiah, is a regenerate perſon; that is, not barely aſſents to this truth; but whereas his work, as the Meſſiah was to make atónement for ſin, and procure the pardon of it, and bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs, and obtain ſalvation for men; he deals by faith with him for theſe things; with his atoning ſacrifice for the expiation of ſin; with his blood for pardon and cleanſing; and with his righteouſneſs for juſtification; receives him as a ſaviour, and depends upon him for life and ſalvation; otherwiſe barely believing him to be the Meſſiah is no other than what the devils themſelves do; who in the days of his fleſh knew and owned him to be the Chriſt the Son of God [1].

With this ſort of faith a man may believe all the doctrines of the Goſpel, and yet not have the root of the matter in him, or true grace. Men may have the whole form of Goſpel-doctrine in their heads, and deny the power of it, or not feel it in their hearts; they may believe the things concerning the kingdom of God and Jeſus Chriſt, as *Simon Magus* did, or however profeſſed to do, and yet be with him in the gall of bitterneſs and bond of iniquity. Yea, many have had ſuch a degree of knowledge in evangelical things, as to be able to preach the Goſpel clearly and diſtinctly, to propheſy or preach in Chriſt's name,

[1] Luke iv. 34, 41.

name, and yet knew him not ſpiritually and experimentally, or were known by him; they may ſpeak with the tongues of men and angels, have all knowledge and all faith of this kind, and yet be without charity or true love to God, to Chriſt, and to divine and ſpiritual things. Indeed, without believing the Goſpel of Chriſt, and the things concerning him, there can be no true faith in him: men can't be children of light without believing the light of the Goſpel, or giving credit to the Goſpel-revelation; and therefore our Lord exhorts men to *believe in the light, that* they *might be children of the light*[m]: the way and means of being ſo, is to attend unto and believe the Goſpel-ſcheme; but then this may be believed, and yet men fall ſhort of the true light of ſpecial grace.

This faith is but a temporary faith, a believing for a while; and it need not be thought ſtrange if perſons that have only this ſhould make ſhipwreck of it, and put away a good conſcience; and which is no inſtance of a true believer's falling away from grace; whereas thoſe who have true faith, and live by it on Chriſt, are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the ſaving of the ſoul: which brings me to obſerve,

3. That there is a ſpecial and ſpiritual faith, to which ſalvation is annexed; with which

[m] John xii. 36.

which he that believes ſhall be ſaved according to the goſpel-declaration; and which directs and encourages ſenſible ſinners to look to Chriſt, and believe in him, aſſuring them they ſhall be ſaved. The ſcheme of ſalvation the Goſpel publiſhes and proclaims is, that it is *by grace through faith* in Chriſt: hence, I ſuppoſe, it is that this ſort of faith is commonly called *ſaving faith*, to diſtinguiſh it from others; though I think not with ſtrict juſtneſs and propriety, and could wiſh the phraſe was diſuſed; ſince it ſeems to derogate and detract from the glory of Chriſt, who is the alone ſaviour, and to carry off the mind from the object of faith, to the act of it. But be this as it will:

This ſort of faith is not of a man's ſelf; it does not owe its original to the creature; it is expreſsly denied to be of man; *that not of yourſelves, it is the gift of God*[n]; it is not the effect of pure nature; it is not the produce of man's free-will and power; *all men have not faith*[p]; there are few that have it, and thoſe that have it, have it not from nature, but by the grace of God. *No man*, ſays Chriſt, *can come unto me*; that is, believe in him, for coming to Chriſt, and believing in him are the ſame thing, *except it were given him of my Father*[q]. And again, *no man can come unto me, except the Father*

[n] Eph. ii. 8. [p] 2 Theſſ. iii. 2. [q] John vi. 65.

which hath ſent me, draw him[r]; that is, by the influence of his Spirit and grace.

Nor is this ſort of faith of the law of works; for as *the law is not of faith*[s], ſo neither is faith of the law; the law is not ſo much as the means of it, nor does it reveal the object, nor require the act, or direct and encourage to it: it is not the means of true faith in Chriſt; *faith comes by hearing the word of God*[t]; but by what part of it? not the law but the goſpel; *received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith*[u]? that is, by the preaching of the law, and the works of it, or by the preaching of the doctrine of faith? by the latter, and not the former: and as the Spirit is not received in that way, or by ſuch means, ſo not the graces of the Spirit, and particularly faith. How ſhould it come this way, ſince the law does not reveal the object of it, Chriſt, or give the leaſt hint concerning him? *by the law is the knowledge of ſin*[w]; but not the knowledge of a ſaviour from ſin: did it reveal Chriſt to a poor awakened ſinner, it would not work that wrath in his conſcience, or leave him without hope of mercy, as it does; and if it knows nothing, and makes known nothing of the object of faith, how can it be thought it ſhould require the act of it? does it require an act upon

[r] John vi. 44. [s] Gal. iii. 12. [t] Rom. x. 17. [u] Gal. iii. 2. [w] Rom. iii. 20.

upon an unknown object? does it require men to believe in an object, it does not reveal or give the leaſt diſcovery of? how ſhould they believe in conſequence of ſuch a requirement, of whom they have not heard the leaſt tittle from the law? nor does the law give any direction or encouragement to ſouls to believe in Chriſt; its language is, *do this and live* [x], but not *believe in Chriſt and be ſaved* [y]; this is the voice of the goſpel, and not of the law. Should it be ſaid that *faith* is reckoned among *the weighter matters of the law* [z]; this is to be underſtood either of fidelity, of faithfulneſs among men, or of truſt in God, as the God of nature and providence, *&c.* giving credit to the revelation of his will, and the worſhip of him according to it.

True faith in Chriſt comes from another quarter than from the covenant of works, and flows in another channel; it is a bleſſing of the covenant of grace, of that covenant which is *ordered in all things, and ſure* [a]; for the glory of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, and for the good of the covenant-ones; it provides all bleſſings of grace for them, for time and eternity, and among the reſt faith in Chriſt Jeſus. This lays open and expoſes a miſtaken and falſe notion of ſome who aſſert, that faith and repentance are conditions

[x] Gal. iii. 12. [y] Acts xvi. 31. [z] Matt. xxiii. 23. [a] 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

ditions of the covenant of grace, when they are the bleſſings of it, included in that promiſe; *a new heart alſo will I give unto you, and a new ſpirit will I put within you; and I will take away the ſtony heart out of your fleſh, and I will give you an heart of fleſh* [b]; and theſe are gifts without repentance, which God never revokes or takes back, or ſuffers to be of no effect. Faith in Chriſt is the fruit of electing grace, and is as ſure as ſalvation itſelf; the one is in the decree of the means, the other in the decree of the end; that decree of election which ſecures the end, *ſalvation*, ſecures alſo the means, *ſanctification of the ſpirit, and belief of the truth* [c]; or faith in Chriſt, who is the truth; ſo it has been in all ages, now is, and ever ſhall be, that *as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed* [d]: hence true faith is called the *faith of God's elect* [e]; it being certain, proper and peculiar to them; and this is the true reaſon why one believes, and another does not; as our Lord ſays of ſome, *ye believe not becauſe ye are not of my ſheep* [f]; the ſheep which the Father gave unto me in election, and in the covenant of grace: let any man riſe up and give a better reaſon if he can, than this that Chriſt has given, why one believes in him, and another does not. Believing in him is the pure gift of God, of his rich ſovereign

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[b] Ezek. xxxvi. 26. [c] 2 Theſſ. ii. 13. [d] Acts xiii. 48. [e] Tit. i. 1. [f] John x. 26.

and diſtinguiſhing grace; he gives it to one, and denies it to another, as he pleaſes; he *hides* the things of Chriſt, and of the Goſpel, *from the wiſe and prudent*, and does not vouchſafe unto them faith in them; and *reveals* them *unto babes*; and gives them faith in his Son; and no other reaſon can be given of it than his ſovereign pleaſure: *even ſo Father*, ſays Chriſt, *for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight* [g].

Special faith in Chriſt is of the operation of the Spirit of God; he produces it by his mighty power in the ſoul; he enlightens the mind, reveals the object, brings near Chriſt, his righteouſneſs and ſalvation, and enables the ſenſible ſinner to look unto him, lay hold on him, and receive him as his ſaviour and redeemer: hence he is called *the Spirit of faith* [h]; becauſe he is the author of it, who begins and carries on, and will perform the work of faith with power; the principal uſe of which grace is to receive all from Chriſt, and give him the glory. God has put this honour upon it, to conſtitute and appoint it to be the *receiver-general* of all the bleſſings of grace. It receives Chriſt himſelf as the Father's free-gift; it receives out of the fulneſs of Chriſt, even grace for grace, or an abundance of it; it receives the bleſſing of righteouſneſs from the Lord for juſtification; it receives the remiſſion of ſins through his blood, according to the goſpel-declaration; it receives the adoption

[g] Matt. xi. 26. [h] 2 Cor. iv. 13.

tion of children, in conſequence of the way being opened for it thro' the redemption which is in Chriſt; it receives the inheritance among them that are ſanctified, the right unto it, and the claim upon it; and to this poſt it is advanced, that all the glory might redound to the grace of God; *it is of faith, that it might be by grace*[i]: there are other uſes of faith, and actings of it, which will be obſerved under the following head. I now proceed to conſider,

II. The objects of faith, as in the words directed to, the Lord God and his prophets. 1ſt. The Lord our God, who is the one Lord to be believed in; *hear, O* Iſrael, *the Lord our God is one Lord*[k]: from which paſſage the ancient *Jews*[l] have eſtabliſhed the doctrine of a Trinity of perſons in the Godhead, as well as the doctrine of the unity of the divine Being; and certain it is, that Father, Son, and Spirit, are the one God; and each, and every one of them, are to be believed in, and are the proper objects of faith.

1. God the Father is the object of faith, who is to be believed in; and to believe in him, is not merely to believe his exiſtence and perfections, for he is a fool indeed that believes there is no God; nor merely to believe

[i] Rom. iv. 16. [k] Deut vi. 4. [l] See my Expoſition of 1 John v. 7.

lieve in him as the God of nature and providence, and to truſt in him for the preſervation of life, and the continuance of the bleſſings and mercies of it, and to glorify him for them; tho' there are ſome who believe there is a God, yet do not glorify him as ſuch, nor truſt in his goodneſs, nor are thankful for providential favours: but to believe in him with a ſpecial faith, is to believe in him as he has proclaimed his name in Chriſt, *a God gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin* [m]; it is to believe in him as our covenant-God and Father, for ſo he is to his people in Chriſt; he is to them what he is to him, as he ſays [n], *I aſcend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God:* it was a noble act of faith expreſſed by *David* [o], *I truſted in thee, O Lord, I ſaid, thou art my God*; and ſuch ſhould believe that this God, who is their God, will be their God and guide even unto death; ſince covenant-relation always ſubſiſts, and can never be made void. And whereas the Father of Chriſt ſtands in the relation of a father to his people; it becomes them, having had the teſtimony of the Spirit of adoption, witneſſing to their ſpirits that they are the children of God, to call him in faith, and with a filial fear and reverence, their father, and not turn away from

[m] Exod. xxxiv. 6. [n] John xx. 17. [o] Pſ. xxxi. 14.

from him: to believe in him, is to believe in his everlaſting and unchangeable love; and to believe that it is ſo, and their intereſt in it, it being ſhed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit given unto them; this love being declared unto them by the Lord himſelf, and affirmed in the ſtrongeſt terms, ſaying [p], *I have loved thee with an everlaſting love*; of which he has given full proof, not only by his choice of them in Chriſt, and by the redemption of them thro' him, but by drawing them with loving kindneſs to himſelf in effectual vocation; it ſhould be believed: it is a glorious act of faith of the apoſtle's, when he ſays [q], *I am perſuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord*; this is to be rooted and grounded in it. To believe in God the Father, is to believe in him as the God of all grace, the author and giver of it; that his grace is ſufficient for us in all times of need; that he is able to cauſe all grace to abound towards us; and that he will ſupply all our wants, according to his riches in glory by Chriſt Jeſus: it is to believe in his promiſes, which are exceeding great and precious; that he is faithful who has promiſed, and will perform; that he will

[p] Jer. xxxi. 3. [q] Rom. viii. 38, 39.

will never ſuffer his faithfulneſs to fail, nor any good word which he has ſpoken; that all his promiſes are yea and amen in Chriſt: it is to believe in his power, that he is able alſo to perform and make good what he has ſaid; and likewiſe that there is in him everlaſting ſtrength, and that according to his promiſe, as our day is, our ſtrength ſhall be; and that we are, and ſhall be kept by his power, thro' faith, unto ſalvation.

2. Jeſus Chriſt, the Son of God, is alſo the object of faith: *ye believe in God, believe alſo in me* [r], ſays Chriſt himſelf; who is God as well as the Father, and to be believed in equally with him: the Goſpel directs to faith in Chriſt, and it is the principal thing it encourages to; the miniſters of it point him out to ſenſible and diſtreſſed ſinners, ſaying, *believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and* ye *ſhall be ſaved* [s]: the ſum of the Goſpel, of the word of faith is, *that if thou ſhalt confeſs with the mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhall believe in thine heart that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteouſneſs, and with the mouth confeſſion is made unto ſalvation* [t]. The *Targum*, or *Chaldee* paraphraſe of our text, is, *believe in the word of the Lord your God*; where the *Paraphraſt*, by the *memra Jehovah*, or *word of the Lord*, does not mean the written word

[r] John xiv. 1. [s] Act. xvi. 31. [t] Rom. x. 9, 10.

of the Lord, the ſcriptures; nor the oral word of the Lord, what was ſpoken by the prophets, as it is ſaid he ſometimes does; ſince it follows in the ſame paraphraſe, *believe in his law, and in his prophets*; wherefore it is to be underſtood of the eſſential word, the Son of God, who is to be believed in; and various are the acts of faith which are exerciſed on him, or believing on him is expreſſed by various things.

Faith in Chriſt is ſignified by *ſeeing* him, and looking unto him; an unknown Chriſt cannot, but an unſeen Chriſt is, and may be, the object of faith: *faith is the evidence of things not ſeen*[a], the principal of which is an unſeen Chriſt: the believer by faith beholds the glory of his perſon, the fulneſs of his grace, the excellency of his righteouſneſs, the preciouſneſs and efficacy of his blood, and the ſuitableneſs of his ſalvation; and it looks to him, for peace and pardon, for righteouſneſs, eternal life and happineſs; and keeps looking to him as the author and finiſher of faith. It is a *motion* of the ſoul towards Chriſt; it not only looks at him, and gazes with admiration and pleaſure on the glories of his perſon, and the riches of his grace, but goes out unto him: faith is the ſoul's coming to Chriſt, which it is encouraged to do, by his kind invitation, *come unto*

[a] Heb. xi. 1.

unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt [w]; and by his gracious declarations and reſolutions, that he *will in no wiſe caſt out him that cometh to* him [x]: yea, it is expreſſed by a ſwift motion to him; by a *fleeing* to him for refuge under a ſenſe of ſin and danger; by *running* to the name of the Lord for ſafety, which is as a ſtrong tower; and by turning into the ſtrong-hold Chriſt, as priſoners of hope: to believe in him, is not only to behold him with an eye of faith, to flee and come unto him in a way of believing, but to *lay hold* upon him, and embrace him; for Chriſt is *a tree of life to them that lay hold upon* him, *and happy is every one that retaineth* him [y]: it is to lay hold upon the ſkirt of him that is a *Jew*; to lay hold upon his righteouſneſs; to lay hold upon his ſtrength; to lay hold upon his covenant, the bleſſings and promiſes of it; to lay hold on him as the mediator of the covenant; to hold him faſt, and not let him go, ſaying with *Job, tho' he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him—he alſo ſhall be my ſalvation* [z]. Faith in Chriſt is a *leaning* on him, while paſſing thro' this wilderneſs; it is a recumbency, a relying upon him for ſalvation; a ſtaying a man's ſelf upon the mighty God of *Jacob*; laying the whole ſtreſs of his ſalvation on him; caſting all his care,

[w] Matt. xi. 28. [x] John vi. 37. [y] Prov. iii. 18.
[z] Job xiii. 15, 16.

care, and all his burthens on him, who has promiſed to ſuſtain him and them; believing he is able to keep him from falling, and to keep what he has committed to him: for to believe in Chriſt, is to *give up* all into his hands, our ſouls, and the eternal concerns of them; to expect all grace, and all the ſupplies of it from him, even all grace here, and glory hereafter: it is in one word, to deal with his perſon for acceptance with God; with his blood for pardon and cleanſing; with his ſacrifice for atonement; with his righteouſneſs for juſtification; with his fulneſs for every ſupply of grace, looking for his mercy unto eternal life.

3. The Holy Spirit of God is likewiſe the object of faith; we read and hear much of faith in God, and of faith in Jeſus Chriſt, but very little of faith in the Holy Ghoſt; and yet as he is the one God with the Father and the Son, he is equally to be believed in as they are: and we are not only to believe his being and perfections, his deity and perſonality, his offices as a ſanctifier and comforter, and the operations of his grace on the ſouls of men; but there are particular acts of faith, truſt, and confidence, to be exerciſed on him: as he is God, he is to be worſhipped, and this can't be done aright without faith; he is particularly to be prayed unto, and there is no praying to him, nor praying in him, without faith; we are

to

to truſt in him for his help and aſſiſtance in prayer, and indeed in the exerciſe of every religious duty, and even of every grace. I fear miniſters of the word do not truſt in him as they ſhould do in the diſcharge of their work, nor private chriſtians in the performance of theirs: and beſides all this, there is an act of ſpecial faith to be put forth upon him, as upon the other two perſons; for as we are to truſt in God the Father to keep us through his power to ſalvation, and to truſt in Chriſt for the ſalvation of our ſouls, and to truſt the ſalvation of them with him; ſo we are to truſt in the Holy Spirit for carrying on and finiſhing the work of grace on our ſouls, who is equal to it; we are to truſt the whole of it with him, and be *confident of this very thing*; as we may be, as of any one thing in the world, *that he*, the Spirit of God, *which hath begun a good work in* us, *will perform until the day of Jeſus Chriſt* [b].

2dly, The prophets of the Lord are to be believed; firſt the Lord, and then his prophets being ſent by him, and coming from him, bringing a meſſage from him, and declaring his will; ſo the children of *Iſrael* at the red ſea believed the Lord and his ſervant *Moſes* [c].

1. By the *prophets* are meant the prophets of the Old Teſtament, who are to be believed, ſince they ſpoke as they were *moved* by

[b] Phil. i. 6. [c] Exod. xiv. 31.

by the Holy Ghoſt; *the ſpirit of the Lord ſpoke by* them, *and his word was in* their *tongue*[b]: he dictated to them what they ſhould ſay; he led them into all truths they delivered; he indited the ſcriptures of truth, and therefore they ought to be credited as ſuch: nay, not only *all ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God*, even all the writings of the prophets; but whatſoever things were *written afore-time, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the ſcriptures, might have hope*; the whole of ſcripture is *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for inſtruction in righteouſneſs*[c]; which ſeveral advantageous uſes ſhould the more recommend the writings of the prophets to our faith and love; and eſpecially ſince they contain many things in them concerning Chriſt, the more immediate object of ſpecial faith; there are many things in the pſalms, and in the law, and in the prophets concerning him; *Moſes* wrote of him, and all the prophets bear witneſs to him. Their writings abundantly teſtify of him, of his perſon, offices, and grace, of what he ſhould be, and what he ſhould do and ſuffer; they teſtified beforehand of the ſufferings of Chriſt, and the glory that ſhould follow; and eſpecially we, at this time of day, have great reaſon to believe

[b] 2 Pet. 1, 21. 2 Sam. 23, 2. [c] Rom. 15, 4. 2 Tim. 3, 16.

believe the prophets, ſince the far greater part of what they propheſied of, is exactly come to paſs. The prophecies of *Iſaiah*, concerning the captivity of the *Jews*, and their deliverance from it by *Cyrus*, who is mentioned by name a hundred and fifty years or more before he was born, have been punctually fulfilled. Alſo *Daniel*'s prophecies concerning *Darius* king of *Perſia*, and *Alexander* the Great, under the names of the ram and he-goat; and of the kings of *Egypt* and *Syria*, and what ſhould be done in their times; and not only theſe, but others of greater importance, concerning the Meſſiah, his birth of a virgin, the place of his birth, his miracles, ſufferings, and death, his reſurrection from the dead, aſcenſion to heaven, and ſeſſion at the right hand of God, the effuſion of the ſpirit, and the ſpread and ſucceſs of the goſpel in the Gentile world, as well as the deſtruction of the Jewiſh nation, for their rejection of him; on account of all theſe things, and more, the prophets of the Old Teſtament claim our faith and credit.

2. The prophets of the New Teſtament are to be believed. The apoſtles of our Lord are by him called *prophets* and *wiſe men*; ſome of which, he ſays, the Jews would *kill*, and *crucify*, and others *ſcourge*[a]: they are

[a] Matt. xxiii. 34.

are ſo called, both becauſe they were extraordinary preachers of the word, and foretellers of things to come, and on both accounts were to be believed. He that received them, received Chriſt, and he that rejected them, rejected him, and his father that ſent him. *John* the divine, was eminently a prophet in both reſpects, as he was a faithful diſpenſer of the word, and bore record of it, and of the teſtimony of Jeſus, and as he foretold things to come under a divine inſpiration: his *Revelation* is a prophecy of what ſhould be in the world and church, from his time, to the ſecond coming of Chriſt; great part of which has already been fulfilled; and there is all the reaſon in the world to believe the reſt will be accompliſhed. The ſayings in it are the ſayings of God, and they are faithful and true; believe what he has ſaid by this his prophet. The ordinary and common preachers of the word are called *prophets*, and their preaching *propheſying*[e]; and tho' we are *not* to *believe every ſpirit*, and every man that pretends to be a ſpiritual man, and a prophet, *but try the ſpirits whether they are of God*, by his word, the ſtandard of faith and practice; *becauſe many falſe prophets are gone out into the world*[f]: yet ſuch who bring the doctrines of Chriſt with

[e] 1 Cor. xiv. 3, 4, 5. 29, 32, 37.

[f] 1 John. 4, 1.

with them, ſuch as are agreeable to the word of God, which are taken out of it, and eſtabliſhed by it, ought to be believed and received, not as the word of man, but as in truth the word of God.

The whole of divine revelation is to be believed, which God has made by his prophets, whether of the Old or of the New Teſtament; and which is all comprehended in theſe words, our Lord began his miniſtry with, *believe the Goſpel*[g]: not to believe this, is the damning ſin of unbelief, ſo much ſpoken of in the New Teſtament; this was the ſin of the Jews, and in which the greater part died, that they believed not that Jeſus was the Meſſiah, and other important truths concerning him, tho' they came with ſuch full evidence; this is the ſin of all, to whom the external revelation of the Goſpel comes, and they believe it not; this is the ſin of the *Deiſts* of the preſent age, of all deniers, rejecters, and deſpiſers of the Goſpel; who either neglect to examine the evidence of it, or notwithſtanding the evidence of it, reject and contemn it; what will the end of ſuch perſons be, that obey not the Goſpel of Chriſt, that do not embrace, but neglect or deſpiſe it? They will be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction; he that believeth not this reve-

[g] Mark. i. 15.

lation ſhall be damned. *This is the condemnation*, the cauſe, and aggravation of it, *that light is come into the world, and men love darkneſs rather than light*[h]; the darkneſs of nature, rather than a divine revelation. This ſort of unbelief, and not want of ſpecial faith in Chriſt, is the cauſe of mens damnation. No man will be loſt or damned, becauſe he has not this faith; to ſay that God will damn any man, becauſe he has not this ſpecial faith in Chriſt, is to repreſent him as *the moſt cruel of all beings*, as the *Arminians* ſay we make him to be; to damn a man for that which is ſolely in his own power to give; for no man can believe in Chriſt with this ſort of faith, unleſs it be given him of his father; and which yet he determines not to give unto him, as unto all the non-elect; and which man never had in his power to have or exerciſe, no, not in the ſtate of innocence. Can any man believe, that God will ever damn a man on ſuch an account as this? This is juſt ſuch good ſenſe, as if it ſhould be ſaid, that a malefactor dies at *Tyburn*, for want of receiving the king's pardon, he did not think fit to give him; tis true, if the king had given him his pardon, and he had received it, it would have ſaved him from dying; but then it is not the want of the king's

[h] John. iii. 19.

king's pardon, or of his receiving it, that is the cauſe of his condemnation and death, but the crimes he was charged with, and convicted of in open court. So, tho' if it pleaſes God to give men ſpecial faith in Chriſt, for the remiſſion of their ſins, they will certainly be ſaved; but then it is not the want of this faith in the blood of Chriſt, for the pardon of ſins, that is the cauſe of any man's condemnation and death, but the tranſgreſſions of the law of God, and the contempt of his Goſpel they have been guilty of. As is the revelation which is made to men, ſuch is the faith that is required of them. If there is no revelation made unto them, no faith is required of them; and unbelief, or want of faith in Chriſt, will not be their damning ſin, as is the caſe of the Heathens; for *how ſhall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?* and *how ſhall they hear without a preacher*[i]? no, they'll be condemned, not for their want of faith in Chriſt, or his Goſpel, which they never heard of, but for their ſins committed againſt the law and light of nature; *as many as have ſinned without law, ſhall periſh without law*[k]: if a revelation is made, this is either external or internal; if only an external revelation is made, the faith required is an aſſent unto it, and a reception of

[i] Rom. x. 14. [k] Rom. ii. 12.

of it; and ſuch who do not attend to the evidence it brings with it, or reject and deſpiſe it, ſhall be damned: but if beſides the external revelation, an internal revelation is made by the ſpirit of wiſdom, in the knowledge of Chriſt; or God by his word calls men effectually by his grace, and reveals his ſon in them, as well as to them; this ſort of revelation comes with ſuch power and influence upon the mind, as *certainly* to produce a true and living faith in the ſoul, which *infallibly* iſſues in eternal life and happineſs; and of ſuch perſons, and of ſuch only, acts of ſpecial faith in Chriſt are required: and tho' the ſin of unbelief is often found in them, it is ſuch as is conſiſtent with true faith in Chriſt, and which in the iſſue is overcome by it: this is the ſin of unbelief, that is oppoſite to ſpecial faith, and obſtructs it in its acts; but partly becauſe it is pardoned with the other ſins of believers, and partly becauſe it is finally ſubdued and vanquiſhed, it is never the damning ſin of any. So I think the truth of things ſtands. I proceed,

III. To conſider the advantages ariſing from faith in God, and in his word, *eſtabliſhment* and *proſperity*. Now, tho' eſtabliſhment is annexed to faith in the Lord our God, and proſperity to faith in his prophets; yet

this is not ſo to be underſtood, as if eſtabliſhment only followed upon faith in God, and not upon faith in his word; and as if proſperity was the conſequence of faith in the word only, and not of faith in God; whereas, as on the one hand, the prophets and miniſters of the word, are the means of eſtabliſhing believers; hence the apoſtle *Paul* was deſirous of imparting the ſpiritual gifts he had received, *to the end* the ſaints might *be eſtabliſhed*[l], and ſpeaks of God as *of power to eſtabliſh* men, *according* to his *Goſpel*[m]; ſo, on the other hand, ſpiritual peace and proſperity flow from faith in God, who *keeps* ſuch *in perfect peace, whoſe mind is ſtayed on* him, *becauſe he truſteth in* him[n]; wherefore theſe things are to be conſidered, not in a ſtrict ſeparate ſenſe, but promiſcuouſly, as they are the joint effects of both faith in God, and in his word.

1ſt. *Eſtabliſhment*; which is to be underſtood, not of the ſtate of believers, but of their hearts, frames, graces and duties.

1. Not of the ſtate of the people of God, which is in itſelf firm and ſtable, and cannot be made more ſo: they are ſafe in the arms of everlaſting love; they are not only engraven by the Lord upon the palms of his hands, and ſet as a ſeal upon his arm, but alſo

[l] Rom. i. 11. [m] Rom. xvi. 25. [n] Iſ. xxvi. 3.

alſo as a ſeal upon his heart. Nothing in heaven, earth, or hell, can ſeparate them from his love; it is invariably the ſame, in whatſoever condition or circumſtance they are; when he hides or chides, he ſtill loves; he reſts in his love; it is more immoveable than rocks or mountains. They are fixed in the hands of Chriſt, out of whoſe hands neither ſin, nor ſatan, nor the world can pluck them, and out of which they ſhall never fall. What was ſaid by the queen of *Sheba*, concerning *Solomon*, with reſpect to *Iſrael*; *becauſe thy God loved Iſrael, to eſtabliſh them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them*[p], may be ſaid of Chriſt, with reſpect to his people; that becauſe he loved the ſaints, and in order to eſtabliſh them for ever and ever, he put them into the hands of Chriſt, where they are ſafe from all danger, and from every enemy. They are ſecured in the covenant of grace, which is ſure and immoveable; its bleſſings are the ſure mercies of *David*; its promiſes are yea and amen in Chriſt; it is eſtabliſhed on better promiſes than any other covenant; and the perſons in it can never be removed out of it. They are ſettled on the rock of ages, on which the church is built, againſt which the gates of hell can never prevail; they are built on a ſure foundation God has laid

[p] 2 Chron. ix. 8.

laid in *Zion*; ſo that, tho' ſtorms and tempeſts of corruptions, temptations, and afflictions ſhould beat upon them, they ſtand unmoved againſt them all, being built on a rock. They are in a ſtate of grace, in which they will ever remain; they are in a ſtate of juſtification, and ſhall never enter into condemnation; they are in the family of God, by adopting grace, out of which they will never be turned; for, *if a ſon, no more a ſervant*, but *an heir of God thro' Chriſt* [p]; they are in a ſtate of regeneration, and can never be unborn again; they have the principle of grace, which ſprings up unto eternal life: theſe things are ſo chained together, that not one link can ever be broken; *whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo called, and whom he called, them he alſo juſtified, and whom he juſtified, them alſo he glorified* [q]. Now this eſtabliſhment does not ariſe from faith, nor is it by it; if all the faith that ever was in the world, from *Adam* to this moment, was engroſſed and poſſeſſed by one man, it would not make his ſtate, God-ward, a whit the ſurer and firmer than it is. But,

2. The hearts of God's people are very unſettled, and need eſtabliſhing; they melt like wax, and flow like water thro' fear, and want of ſtronger faith. They are *unſtable as water*,

[p] Gal. iv. 7. [q] Rom. viii. 30.

water, as is ſaid of *Reuben*, and do *not excel*[r]; their frames are changeable and various; one while their *mountain ſtands ſtrong*, and they ſay they ſhall *never be moved*; preſently God hides his face, and their ſouls are *troubled*[s]: one that could ſay, *the Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him*, ſoon comes into ſuch diſtreſs as to *put his mouth in the duſt, if ſo be there may be hope*[t]; he whoſe love is as *ſtrong as death*, exceeding fervent and ardent, *the coals thereof give a moſt vehement flame*, which *many waters cannot quench*[u]; through the prevalence of corruption, the force of temptation, and the ſnares of the world, waxes chill and cold. And he that ſeemed to be ſtedfaſt in the faith, falls from ſome degree of his ſtedfaſtneſs of it; and inſtead of quitting himſelf like a man, is like a child toſſed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, wavers in his profeſſion, ſlackens in his duty, and is negligent of it. Now faith in God, and in his word, has a tendency to eſtabliſh the heart, and make it fearleſs; *he ſhall not be afraid of evil tidings*, even he whoſe *heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord*; *his heart is eſtabliſhed, he ſhall not be afraid*[x]: as is a man's faith, ſo are his other graces; if faith is in lively exerciſe, hope will be lively too, and be as an anchor

ſure

[r] Gen. xlix. 4. [s] Pſ. xxx. 6, 7. [t] Lam. iii. 24, 29. [u] Cant. viii. 6, 7. [x] Pſ. cxii. 7, 8.

ſure and ſtedfaſt; his love will abound, for faith works by it; he'll become eſtabliſhed in the truths of the goſpel he believes, and has an experience of; he'll be more ſtable and conſtant in the diſcharge of duty; he'll be *ſtedfaſt and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*[y].

2dly, *Proſperity* ariſes from faith in God and his word; not temporal, but ſpiritual proſperity; not proſperity of body, but proſperity of ſoul; ſuch as *Gaius* had, whom the apoſtle *John* thus ſalutes, *beloved, I wiſh above all things, that thou mayeſt proſper and be in health, even as thy ſoul proſpereth*[z]; on which ſoul-proſperity faith has a very great influence. The ſoul is in good health and in a proſperous condition, when there is an appetite for the word; when it hungers and thirſts after righteouſneſs; when it deſires the ſincere milk of the word; when it finds it, and eats it by faith; when the word is mixed with faith upon hearing, and it is taken in and digeſted by it; as alſo when a ſoul has a comfortable view by faith of the forgiveneſs of its ſins through the blood of Chriſt: ſins are diſeaſes, pardon is the healing of them; and then is a believer in a proſperous condition, when *the ſun of righteouſneſs* riſes on him with this *healing in his wings*[a]; and when he *the*

[y] 1 Cor. xv. 58. [z] 3 John 2. [a] Mal. iv. 2.

inhabitant of *Zion ſhall not ſay I am ſick*; the reaſon of which is, becauſe *the people that dwell therein ſhall be forgiven their iniquity*[b]: ſo likewiſe when a man has much ſpiritual peace and joy through believing in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt for his juſtification; in his blood for the remiſſion of his ſins; and in his ſacrifice for the atonement of them; and ſpiritual joy is ſuch a certain concomitant or conſequence of faith, that it is called *the joy of faith*[c]; and whoever is poſſeſſed of it muſt in a ſpiritual ſenſe be in proſperous circumſtances. Such a one is fat and flouriſhing, and all he does proſpers: and as proſperity in the text carries in it an idea of victory over enemies, this may be aſcribed to faith; it is by faith the believer reſiſts ſatan and his temptations: by holding up the ſhield of faith, he quenches his fiery darts, and obtains a conqueſt over him; as he does alſo over the world, the men, things and luſts of it: *this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith; who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jeſus is the ſon of God*[d]? what heroic actions, what wonderful things have been done by faith! men *thro' faith* have *ſubdued kingdoms, wrought righteouſneſs, obtained promiſes, ſtopped the mouths of lions*, &c.

[b] Iſ. xxxiii. 24. [c] Phil. i. 25. [d] 1 John v. 5, 6.

&c[e]. and ſuch muſt be in proſperous and flouriſhing circumſtances.

From the whole we learn, what an excellent and precious grace, the grace of faith is; what uſe it is of, what purpoſes it ſerves, and what influence it has upon the ſtability and proſperity of the believer; it is pity it ſhould be put out of its place; for when it keeps its place, it is very uſeful and ſerviceable; but if it is put in the room of Chriſt, it is good for nothing. Careful we ſhould be, not to aſcribe that to the act, which belongs to the object. It may be known, whether a perſon has this grace or no; for where it is, Chriſt is precious, *to them that believe he is precious*[f]; it works and ſhews itſelf by love to him, his word and ordinances, his people, and his ways; and it is attended with good works, the fruits of righteouſneſs; for *faith without works is dead*[g]: and if perſons are ſatisfied that they have this grace, they ſhould be thankful for it, and attribute it, not to the power of their own free will, but to the free grace of God, whoſe gift it is; for it comes along with the abundant and ſuperabundant grace of God in converſion. And ſuch who have it ſhould pray for an increaſe of it; ſince their ſtability and proſperity have ſuch

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[e] Heb. xi. 36. [f] 1 Pet. i. 7. [g] James ii. 26.

a connexion with it; and ſhould guard againſt unbelief; and upon every appearance of it, pray as the poor man did, *Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief* [h]. To conclude, ſince ſuch are the advantages of believing in God and his word, *take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God* [i].

[h] Mark xi. 24. [i] Heb. iii. 12.

FINIS.

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